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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INR/R/MR; IIP/RW; IIP/RNY (FRANK); BBG/VOA; IIP/WEU; AF/PA; EUR/WE (DEBORAH MENNUTI)/P/SP; D/C (MCCOO); EUR/PA (BERBENA); INR/P; INR/EUC; PM; OSC ISA FOR ILN; NEA; WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE; DOC FOR ITA/EUR/FR AND PASS USTR/PA (ANN LUZZATO); USINCEUR FOR PAO; NATO/PA; MOSCOW/PA; ROME/PA; BRUSSELS/PA; USVIENNA FOR USDEL OSCE.

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - MIDDLE EAST - LEBANON - SYRIA
KAREN HUGHES NOMINATION - U.S. IMAGE ABROAD CHINA - TAIWAN
RELATIONS
PARIS - TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

- [1](#)1. MIDDLE EAST - LEBANON - SYRIA
- [1](#)2. KAREN HUGHES NOMINATION - U.S. IMAGE ABROAD
- [1](#)3. CHINA - TAIWAN RELATIONS

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE NOMINATION OF KAREN HUGHES AS UNDERSECRETARY FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IS PROMINENTLY ANNOUNCED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF LE FIGARO, UNDER THE HEADING: "PRESIDENT BUSH WANTS TO IMPROVE AMERICA'S IMAGE," A TITLE REPEATED ON PAGE TWO ABOVE THE ARTICLE BY CORRESPONDENT PHILIPPE GELIE. (SEE PART C)
SEPARATELY, LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION DEVOTES A REPORT TO THE "HIDDEN PROPAGANDA" FOR THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION IN PAID-FOR REPORTS, AS REVEALED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES LAST SUNDAY.

"IN BEIRUT, A TIDE OF ANTI-SYRIAN PROTEST" IS THE HEADLINE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO, WHILE CATHOLIC LA CROIX TITLES ITS FRONT-COVER: "RE-ENFORCED LEBANESE OPPOSITION IN THE STREETS." LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION REPORTS ON "BEIRUT, THE ANTI-SYRIAN," AND IN HIS EDITORIAL GERARD DUPUY APPLAUDS THE "FALLEN INTERNAL BARRIERS" WHICH HAVE BROUGHT TOGETHER ONE OUT OF FOUR LEBANESE. BUT DUPUY ALSO WARNS THAT HEZBOLLAH CANNOT BE EXCLUDED FROM LEBANON'S POLITICAL LIFE. IN HIS ANALYSIS, WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT PASCAL RICHE SUGGESTS "A SOFTENING IN WASHINGTON TOWARDS HEZBOLLAH." (SEE PART C)

IN AN INTERVIEW IN LE FIGARO, MOSTLY DEVOTED TO THE FRENCH PHILOSOPHER RAYMOND ARON, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVE PIERRE LELLOUCHE MAKES THE FOLLOWING REMARK: "BEFORE 9/11, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, LIKE OTHERS BEFORE, EASILY ACCEPTED THE STATUS QUO IN THE MIDDLE EAST. SINCE 9/11, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION HAS CLEARLY GIVEN UP ON ITS ISOLATIONIST STANCE AND OPTED FOR A STRATEGY OF 'DEMOCRATIC EVANGELISM' AIMED AT THIS SAME STATUS QUO IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THE ADOPTION OF WAHHABISM IN WIDE REGIONS OF THE ARAB WORLD IS NOT SOMETHING TO BE TAKEN LIGHTLY. ISLAMIC EXTREMISM CARRIES THE SAME INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL DEVICES AS THOSE OF NAZI TERRORISM, FOCUSING ITS ANIMOSITY ON THE WEST AND THE JEWS."

THE CHINESE PARLIAMENT'S VOTE ON AN ANTI-SECESSION LAW VIS-A-VIS TAIWAN IS REPORTED IN LA CROIX, WHILE REGIONAL LES DERNIERES NOUVELLES D'ALSACE DEVOTES ITS FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL TO "ONE CHINA." (SEE PART C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

MIDDLE EAST - LEBANON - SYRIA

"INTERNAL BORDERS"

GERARD DUPUY IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (03/15): "THE IMMENSE CROWD IN BEIRUT BROUGHT TOGETHER ONE LEBANESE OUT OF FOUR. THEY ALL ASPIRE TO BECOME LEBANESE. LAST WEEK'S COUNTER DEMONSTRATION BY HEZBOLLAH HAS CHANGED NOTHING. IT IS CLEAR TODAY WHERE THE HEARTS OF THE LEBANESE PEOPLE LIE. THIS NEW MAJORITY SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT THE LEBANESE HAVE FINALLY ACKNOWLEDGED THE FACT THAT TO PUSH THE OCCUPIER OUTSIDE ITS BOUNDARIES, THEY ALSO NEEDED TO BRING DOWN THE INTERNAL BORDERS SEPARATING THEM. IF SYRIA CANNOT DIVIDE, IT CANNOT REIGN. BUT THE HEZBOLLAH DEMONSTRATION ALSO SHOWS THAT THIS MINORITY MUST HAVE ITS PLACE IN LEBANESE SOCIETY. THE OPPROBRIUM, WHICH THE U.S. HAS HEAPED ON HEZBOLLAH IN THE NAME OF ITS FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM, WILL NOT MAKE THIS EASY. BUT HOW CAN LEBANON BE REBUILT WHILE EXCLUDING A FOURTH OR A THIRD OF ITS POPULATION? A MOBILIZATION OF THIS MAGNITUDE ANYWHERE ELSE WOULD BE A CAUSE FOR CONCERN. BUT IN LEBANON, THIS PEACEFUL MOVEMENT GIVES ONE THE FEELING THAT A NEW FUTURE IS POSSIBLE, WHICH IS NEITHER WAR NOR OCCUPATION."
KAREN HUGHES NOMINATION - U.S. IMAGE ABROAD

"BUSH WANTS TO IMPROVE AMERICA'S IMAGE"

PHILIPPE GELIE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (03/15): "KAREN HUGHES WILL HAVE TO TIGHTEN WASHINGTON'S MESSAGE . WITH THE

MAIN TARGET THE ARAB-MUSLIM WORLD. HER SECOND IN COMMAND, DIANA POWELL. SPEAKS ARABIC. HUGHES LINE OF ATTACK WILL BE TO FOLLOW THE NEW POLITICAL ORIENTATION GIVEN TO FOREIGN DIPLOMACY IN THE BUSH II ADMINISTRATION. THE TIME HAS COME AND GONE FOR WORDS LIKE `CRUSADE.' THE SIGNAL SENT FROM WASHINGTON TODAY IS MORE ONE WHERE DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION ARE SUGGESTED, AS WELL AS SELF-DETERMINATION AND PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM. AS HIS SECOND TERM BEGINS, IT SEEMS THAT PRESIDENT BUSH IS ALIGNING HIS ACTIONS WITH HIS WORDS. THE CHANGE OF METHOD WITH EUROPE IS SPECTACULAR. LAST MONTH, PRESIDENT BUSH TRAVELED TO EUROPE TO STRENGTHEN THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE AND RENEW HIS TIES WITH THE LEADERS OF THE ANTI-WAR CAMP. BUSH IS INVOLVED IN A TRULY JOINT POLICY WITH FRANCE ON LEBANON AND SYRIA. EVEN WHEN IT COMES TO CHINA AND THE ARMS EMBARGO, WHICH IS A MAJOR CONCERN FOR WASHINGTON, THE TONE IS CONCILIATORY. WHAT IS MOST SURPRISING IS THAT THESE NEW SIGNALS ARE COMING FROM PRACTICALLY THE SAME TEAM, THERE HAS JUST BEEN A LITTLE GAME OF MUSICAL CHAIRS."

CHINA - TAIWAN RELATIONS

"ONE CHINA"

OLIVIER PICARD IN REGIONAL LES NOUVELLES D'ALSACE (03/15): "THE EXPECTED OBJECTION FROM THE UNITED STATES MATTERS LITTLE: IT WAS ANTICIPATED, AND THE AMERICAN SECRETARY OF STATE, CONDOLEEZZA RICE, WHO ARRIVES SUNDAY IN THE CHINESE CAPITAL KNOWS WHAT TO EXPECT. WITH THIS SPECTACULAR AND TRULY THREATENING INITIATIVE, CHINA WANTS TO STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION INTERNATIONALLY. GLARING AT TAIWAN IS ONE WAY TO TELL AMERICA THAT (CHINA) HAS DECIDED SOON TO BECOME THE ONLY OTHER WORLD POWER CAPABLE OF STANDING UP TO AMERICA. THE RISK OF IMMINENT WAR IS CERTAINLY NOT HIGH, BECAUSE THE MOST POPULATED COUNTRY IN THE WORLD CANNOT AFFORD TO WEAKEN ITS DOUBLE-DIGIT ECONOMIC GROWTH, WHICH IT NEEDS FOR SEVERAL MORE YEARS TO REACH A LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT EQUAL TO ITS GLOBAL AMBITIONS. CHINA IS A PATIENT STRATEGIST WHO HAS WAITED A LONG TIME TO TAKE REVENGE AND SHOW HER TRUE STRENGTH, AND NEVER WILL SHE ALLOW HERSELF TO LOSE FACE."

"CHINA ALLOWS ITSELF THE OPTION OF WAR"

DORIAN MALOVIC IN CATHOLIC LA CROIX (03/15): "BEIJING'S BELLICOSE VERBAL THREATS ARE NOTHING NEW. BUT BY INCLUDING THEM INTO A LAW, CHINA INCREASES ITS PRESSURE ON TAIWAN'S INDEPENDENT MOVEMENT, WHICH WILL HAVE TO TONE DOWN, AT LEAST PUBLICLY, ITS ASPIRATIONS FOR EMANCIPATION. BUT WE ARE STILL VERY FAR FROM A SCENARIO OF WAR IN THE STRAIGHT OF TAIWAN."
LEACH